



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1080/09700161.2017.1295609](https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1295609)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bajpaee, C. (2017). Book Review: India-China Relations: Politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order. *Strategic Analysis*, 41(3), 300-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1295609>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Book Review

Jagannath P. Panda, **India-China Relations: Politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order**, Oxon/ New York, Routledge, 2017, 273 pp., GBP.90.00 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-138-83359-3

Chietigj Bajpae¹

Jagannath P. Panda's *India-China Relations: Politics of Resources, Identity and Authority in a Multipolar World Order* is a welcome addition among the plethora of scholarship available on India-China relations, by bringing analysis of the bilateral relationship into the second decade of the 21st century. After a brief analysis of the 'traditional' areas of interaction in the Sino-Indian relationship – the boundary dispute, Tibet question, and water disputes – the author discusses the "spill-over" effects of the bilateral relationship at the sub-regional, regional, cross-continental and global levels. At the sub-regional level, Panda assesses the impact of China's belt and road ('One Belt, One Road' / 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and Silk Road Economic Belt) and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) initiatives on the bilateral relationship. At the regional level, he examines developments in East, Central and South Asia, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and overlapping multilateral free trade initiatives in the Asia-Pacific. At the cross-continental level, he investigates the role of South-South initiatives, including the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) forums, and engagement with Africa. Finally, at the global level, Panda assesses the bilateral relationship within the context of global governance debates in the Bretton Woods and potential post-Bretton woods international system.

In contemplating the interplay between both countries' regional and global initiatives, Panda highlights the complexities of the bilateral relationship, which he terms as 'multilayered and polygonal in nature' (p.256). Without mentioning it, Panda is utilising the concept of a 'nested security dilemma'.² In a classic security dilemma supposedly defensive measures by two or more countries result in a mutual diminishment of security.³ The concept of a nested security dilemma is based on the idea that security dilemmas involving major states have externalities beyond their bilateral relationship with implications for regional and global security.

¹The Reviewer is a doctoral candidate in the Department of War Studies at King's College London and was a visiting fellow at the IDSA in 2013.

² George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Also see: Chietigj Bajpae, "Preventing the emergence of a 'nested security dilemma' in the Asian maritime domain: the case of the Sino-Indian relationship", in Nele Lenze and Charlotte Schriwer (eds.) *Converging Regions: Global Perspectives on Asia and the Middle East*, Singapore: Ashgate, November 2014, pp.113-142.

³ For definition of 'security dilemma' see: Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 1978, pp.167-214.

Panda's analysis on the implications of China's 'belt and road' initiatives on the Sino-Indian relationship is particularly insightful. He argues that these initiatives have elevated the importance of South Asia among China's strategic priorities. However, in doing so, this has increased the potential for friction over the perceived encroachment of China into India's periphery. For instance, he warns of the prospect of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) exacerbating China's role as a 'silent' third party in the Kashmir dispute (p.92). The author also highlights the double-standard of China's position: on the one hand, Beijing voices opposition to Indian exploration activities in the South China Sea while on the other it justifies its infrastructure investment in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on the grounds that the latter is a "livelihood project" and commercially-driven (though the same can be said of Indian activities in the South China Sea) (pp.86, 90).

These latent frictions exist not only in regional initiatives, but also at the cross-continental level. Both countries' common cause in strengthening "south-south" solidarity has been demonstrated by the emergence of new global governance initiatives (e.g. BRICS, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)). However, Panda alludes to a potential mismatch of objectives: while China (and Russia) implicitly seek a new anti-US/ anti-Western international order, India is more interested in a more equitable distribution of power within pre-existing institutions (p.242). Panda also questions whether China is attempting to strengthen third world solidarity with these new initiatives or if it is merely focusing on strengthening its own position in the international system (p.199). This is evidenced by China's ambivalent position on India's claim for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) (pp.247-251). This raises questions regarding the sustainability of China and India's so-called 'developmental partnership' (p.246).

Ultimately, Panda questions whether the Sino-Indian relationship can "transcend" the fundamental grievances of the bilateral relationship in their engagements on the world stage. He concludes that this will not be possible, as conflicting ambitions and historical tensions remain a thorn in the bilateral relationship and dilute the potential for real and substantive cooperation. As Panda notes, 'India's main intention here is to engage with China economically, though not strategically' while seeking 'alignment with China without an alliance' (p.247). The chapter on Central Asia (Chapter 9) makes this clear with both countries maintaining a fundamental mismatch in their approaches towards the stabilisation of Afghanistan and dealing with the Taliban, due to their differing relations with Pakistan.

Considering that this study seeks to bring analysis of the bilateral relationship into the 21st century, a notable void is the role of technology, and in particular how the development of both countries' nuclear weapons, cyber-warfare, naval and space capabilities have reduced the strategic "space" in the bilateral relationship.

As a "third wheel" of the Sino-Indian relationship, the role of the United States is also an area worth further exploration, although Panda makes brief note of this

in the concluding chapter (p.261). Notably, the rapprochement in the India-US relationship over the last two decades has been accompanied by successive US administrations seeking to draw India deeper into the regional architecture of East Asia. From joint naval exercises in the Pacific to a strengthening of India's relations with US allies, including Japan, South Korea and Australia and a reframing of the Asia-Pacific into the more expansive Indo-Pacific, the United States has been a key catalyst for reviving India's 'Look East'/'Act East' policy.⁴ And all of this has come to the quiet consternation of China.

The US role in the bilateral relationship also highlights a potential risk in analysing the current state of the Sino-Indian relationship, given the fluid state of bilateral relations and the factors influencing it. For instance, the election of Donald Trump as US president could change the dynamics of the Sino-US and Indo-US relationship and usher a period of flux, as the United States potentially abandons its "strategic pivot" or "re-balance" towards Asia. For instance, with Trump's pledge of abandoning the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Panda's assertion – that 'multilateral trade in Asia is entering a new chapter of interaction and integration with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) initiated by ASEAN and US-centred Trans-Pacific Partnership' (p.164) – has already become out-dated. Trump's more transactional style of conducting foreign policy is also likely to redefine the global governance debate. In this context, the Trump administration could potentially undermine progress made with China and India on climate change.

Finally, how relevant groupings such as the BRICS and BASIC will be remains to be seen. Three of the BRICS countries – Russia, Brazil and South Africa – have already come under significant economic and political pressure arising from the end of the commodity super-cycle. The BASIC group of countries has also become increasingly irrelevant, as China and India have developed divergent approaches in combatting climate change.⁵

Nonetheless, what Panda's book makes abundantly clear is that the China-India relationship will be one of the key defining relationships of the 21st century (chapter 17). The author's grasp of key facts is impressive and this book makes a valuable addition to studies of the Sino-Indian relationship. It will prove useful to students and policymakers alike as they seek to understand the evolving dynamics of the bilateral relationship.

⁴ Chietigj Bajpae, "China-India: Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship" *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2015, pp.108-145, http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/digital/pdf/Winter_15/Bajpae.pdf; Chietigj Bajpae, "Embedding India in Asia: Reaffirming the Indo-Pacific Concept" *Journal of Defence Studies*, 8(4), October-December 2014, pp.83-110.

⁵ Chietigj Bajpae, "Modi, India and emerging global economic order" *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 9(2), 2016, pp.198-210.